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UNH Media Relations

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Recommended Citation

Potier, Beth, ““Frozen” Director Jennifer Lee Discourages Self-Doubt at UNH Commencement” (2014). *UNH Today*. 4503.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/4503>

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May 17, 2014

"Frozen" Director Jennifer Lee Discourages Self-Doubt at UNH Commencement



Jennifer Lee '92, director/writer of the Walt Disney Animation Studios film "Frozen," spoke at the University of New Hampshire's 144th commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 17, 2014.

Credit: Mark Bolton

DURHAM, N.H. - University of New Hampshire commencement speaker Jennifer Lee '92 encouraged graduates and guests to banish self-doubt during the university's 144th commencement held Saturday, May 17, 2014. More than 2,200 undergraduate and 488 graduate students -- including 55 military veterans -- ranging in age from 20 to 74 years old and representing 42 states and 17 foreign countries received degrees.

"When you are free from self-doubt, you fail better," said Lee, director/writer of the Walt Disney Animation Studios film "Frozen." "You accept criticism and listen."

"If the first draft of 'Frozen' was the one we made ... it wouldn't be 'Frozen' and I wouldn't be

standing here, for sure," she added.

Lee recalled her UNH days with fondness, singling out living in Stoke Hall, a course called "Foods and Dudes," and a dear friend whose untimely death her junior year inspired her to move beyond her own insecurity and pursue a life in New York City that led to a master's degree in film from Columbia University.

Lee is the first woman to direct an animated feature film for Walt Disney Animation Studios. In March, she took home an Oscar® for Best Animated Feature at the Academy Awards. She also is the first female director to have a film surpass the \$1 billion earning mark and the first writer at any major animation studio to become a director.

Prior to Lee's speech, Faculty Marshall Nancy Kinner, professor of civil and environmental engineering, led the crowd in her own Wildcat adaptation of the "Frozen" hit "Let It Go." UNH President Mark W. Huddleston peppered his remarks with "Frozen" puns before taking a more serious tone. "Today is all about you—about celebrating your success, your triumph over a myriad of challenges, academic and otherwise," Huddleston told the graduates.

Acknowledging that all of the graduates had stories regarding the obstacles they had overcome, he singled out Komot Gabriel, a Sudanese refugee from Manchester, and Emily Stone of Derry, a type 1 diabetic who helped develop a game-based app to help young people manage their diabetes.

"Komot and Emily are two very special people among 3,000 very special people sitting before us today," Huddleston said. "You've all walked your own paths, overcome your own obstacles and written your own distinctive stories here at UNH. You're all unique."

W. Douglas '64 and Stella Scamman '63 of Stratham and Bottomline Technologies received UNH's 2014 Granite State Awards, given in recognition of outstanding community service. The Scammans have been active in New Hampshire politics for more than 30 years. Bottomline Technologies was recognized for its commitment to local communities and encouraging employees to volunteer in the areas where they work and live.

David Hajjar '77G '78G, executive vice provost of Weill Medical College of Cornell University, and Lee received honorary degrees.

The [University of New Hampshire](http://www.unh.edu), founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,300 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

Photographs available to download:

http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2014/05/images/06img_9505_jennifer-lee-9915.jpg

Caption: Jennifer Lee '92, director/writer of the Walt Disney Animation Studios film "Frozen," spoke at the University of New Hampshire's 144th commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 17, 2014.

Credit: Mark Bolton

http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2014/05/images/14img_0509-8952.jpg

Caption: More than 2,200 undergraduate and 488 graduate students received degrees at the University of New Hampshire's 144th commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 17, 2014.

Credit: Vinny Mwano '15, University of New Hampshire

<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2014/05/images/comm14bubbles-3548.jpg>

Caption: More than 2,200 undergraduate and 488 graduate students received degrees at the University of New Hampshire's 144th commencement ceremonies Saturday, May 17, 2014.

Credit: Bridget Finnegan, University of New Hampshire

A list of graduates, broken down by N.H. county and region, is here:

<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2014/05/sw16graduates.cfm>

Read more about commencement:

<http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2014/03/jr19commencement.cfm?item=0#ixzz31nWd5Zxt>

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